



KEYS TO COMMUNICATION

By Keith Phillips

Good communication depends on a few basic principles. Learn these, and you will be well on the way to happy, productive relationships.

Honesty. If you want to get off on the right foot with others, be honest and straightforward from the start.

Tact. It's important to be honest, but it's also important to be loving and considerate in your presentation, especially with people who are naturally sensitive or when the subject could be sensitive.

Wisdom. Wisdom is what helps you be tactful. You'll find a lot of useful wisdom within the pages of the Bible, but you can also get wisdom that is tailor made for each situation by asking God for it. That is promised in the Bible,¹ but you need to ask.

Love. You may not do or say everything right, but if others see that you are motivated by love and concern, little problems or misunderstandings are less likely to become big ones.

Prayer. Sometimes praying together about a shared situation can help things click between two people like nothing else.

Positiveness. Being upbeat usually elicits a like response.

Timing. Knowing when to say something is often as important as knowing what to say. So is knowing when *not* to say anything.



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Approachability. Dictionary definitions of approachable include accessible; easy to meet, know, talk with, etc.; friendly. When someone knows you will take time for him or her, you've won a friend.

Attentiveness. Listen to what others have to say without interrupting, trying to hurry them along, or finishing their sentences for them. Nothing opens a channel for constructive dialogue better than being a good listener.

Open-mindedness. People's opinions and the way they approach problems are as different as people themselves. Letting others express their thoughts and feelings conveys respect and fosters positive, fruitful exchanges. People will be much more at ease with you and more likely to turn to you for advice if they know you will be open to what they have to say, even if you don't agree.

Empathy. Be sensitive to others' likes and dislikes, needs, and moods. Put yourself in their shoes. Practice the Golden Rule.²

A sense of humor. A little laughter can be just the thing to keep potentially difficult exchanges from getting too intense. Lighten up!

Clarity. There would be a lot fewer misunderstandings between people if they didn't beat around the bush or rely so much on hints. Don't leave others guessing; say what you mean. If you're not sure they understand your point, ask them.

Effort. Sometimes communicating is plain hard work.

Consistency. People who communicate regularly understand each other better and are more likely to be able to work through problems when they come up. ■

See James 1:5.

Matthew 7:12

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